

**Submission
No 271**

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING PROCESS IN NEWCASTLE
AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION**

Name: Cr Steve Tucker

Date received: 24/10/2014

The Select Committee Inquiry was established because of matters raised by the ICAC's "Operation Spicer". One of these matters concerned a container terminal at the Port of Newcastle.

It was revealed that a contract with Newcastle Port Corporation was in train prior to the 2011 state election to develop a container terminal on the former BHP Newcastle steelworks site. This did not proceed.

It was revealed by the "Operation Spicer" hearings that this project was central to the election loss by the incumbent (ALP) member Jodie McKay who expressed support for this proposal.

An alternative proposal put forward by the Newcastle based firm - Buldev - envisaged a coal loader for this site. "Operation Spicer" revealed that funding from Buldev and others was directed to the opponents of Ms. McKay and also that NSW (ALP) government ministers were actively involved in undermining her campaign.

The coal loader proposal was subsequently rejected by the newly elected NSW coalition government, leaving the people of Newcastle and the Hunter with a contaminated vacant site with no employment prospects for the foreseeable future.

It is likely that a container terminal would be operating now had the contract been signed in December 2010.

This is all old news about which little can now be done.

I believe that the container terminal/coal loader debacle is central to a number of the subsequent doubtful planning decisions. I am concerned that some of these decisions appear to reward the conspirators. Also some appear to have little merit and have been made to give the appearance that something is being done (for good or bad) to improve the employment prospects of the people of Newcastle and the Hunter and make it appear that the loss of the Container Terminal will have no major impact.

My two questions below concern the future of this important site and the future prospects for large scale non-mining related employment for the people of the Hunter Valley.

I believe that it is in the public interest that these be adequately answered as it is apparent that this deal was a major source of the corrupt payments and manoeuvrings prior to and after the 2011 state election. Despite the commercial confidentiality associated with such contracts, this deal needs to be

brought out into the light of day and scrutinised for any wrongdoing or detriment to the people of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley.

The loss of the container terminal has cost an estimated 10,000 jobs to our region.

1. Does the lease contract for the Port of Newcastle place any restrictions, fees or thresholds on container movements through the Port of Newcastle?
2. If so, what are the details?

Cr. Steve Tucker
Deputy Mayor
Port Stephens Council

24 October 2014